

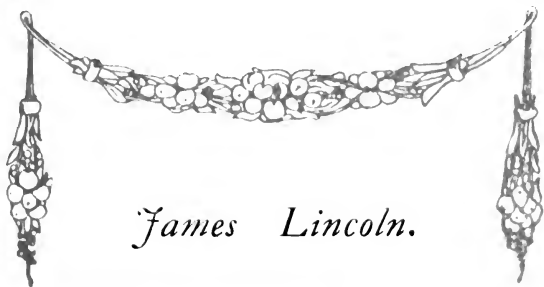
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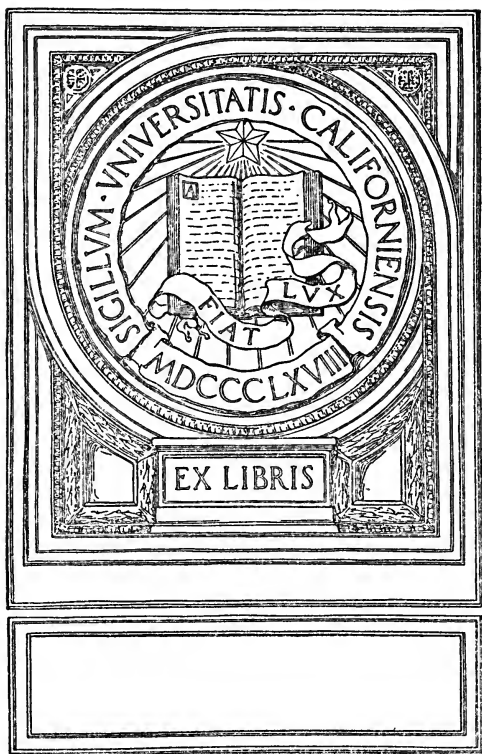
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Relishes of Rhyme



James Lincoln.

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Richard G. Badger.

Presented by

James Lincoln.





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Relishes of Rhyme

JAMES LINCOLN



BOSTON: RICHARD G. BADGER

The Gorham Press

1903



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DEDICATION

Gentle Janet, to you alone I dare
Inscribe the songs that, but for you, were gone
As gusty leaves across autumnal lawn,
Or shepherd's troubled pipings down the air.

As through the Field of Song I went,
An alien, yet with lingering tread,
These few rough leaves I plucked, of scent
Pungent, not sweet, and blotched with red.

FOREWORD

The author is bound to acknowledge the courtesy of the several magazines that have permitted him to include in this volume poems which they had bought and printed. The first of the sonnets, "To England," originally appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*; the second, under the title "A Rumor Goes," in *The New England Magazine*, which also published the sonnet "Betrayed." The lyric, "Pigeon Post," was first issued in the *The Chautauquan*, and "Blood-Road" in *The Churchman*. In general, however, these verses, as commenting upon current events, were printed, when they were printed at all, in newspapers, more often in *The Springfield Republican*, occasionally in *The Boston Transcript*. It will be evident to the reader, if so excellent a personage exist, that they were suggested, in most instances, by cablegrams from South Africa as given to the American press during the Boer war.

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PRELUDES

TO ENGLAND

I

Who would trust England, let him lift his eyes
 To Nelson, columned o'er Trafalgar Square,
 Her hieroglyph of DUTY, written where
The roar of traffic hushes to the skies;
Or mark, while Paul's vast shadow softly lies
 On Gordon's statued sleep, how praise and
 prayer
 Flush through the frank young faces cluster-
 ing there
To con that kindred rune of SACRIFICE.

O England, no bland cloud-ship in the blue,
 But rough oak plunging on o'er perilous jars
Of reef and ice, our faith will follow you
 The more for tempest roar that strains your
 spars
And splits your canvas, be your helm but true,
 Your courses shapen by the eternal stars.

II

But — God forbid ! — if lust of yellow ore,
The pride of power, the trumpet's fanfaronade,
Deform your March of Progress to a raid,
And with Injustice stalking on before
You usher Justice in, then all the more
Because we love you, are we sore afraid,
Yet not of your defeat, whose hearts are made
From stoutest clay that ever planet bore.

We fear your victory, if, truth to tell,
Your cause lack God. Though blood your ar-
teries spill
Is earth's most precious, what shall parallel
Our poverty if good confounds with ill
And right with wrong, if your own stroke should
kill
That great world-conscience you have fostered
well?

THE WAR SPIRIT

The papers read like Kipling,
The thrilling bugles call,
Old Odin falls to tippling
In glad Valhalla hall.

As he quaffs the skull-wrought chalice
His war-maids toss their spears,
The *aurora borealis*
Of our enlightened years.

Above the pallid steeples
Impartially he gloats
On his two Norland peoples
Tearing each other's throats.

"My were-wolves fled the forest
Nigh twenty centuries back,
But when my thirst is sorest,
I whistle to the pack,

"And blood runs, hot and ruddy,
More delicately spiced
For scents of town and study
And tears of their White Christ."

REMARKS FROM UNCLE SAM

"I can't throw stones," sighed Uncle Sam,
As meek as any mouse.

"I can't throw stones," sighed Uncle Sam,
"Whatever comes to pass."

"I can't throw stones," sighed Uncle Sam,
"I've built my own new house
— Imperial style, not pebble-proof —
Of Philippino glass.

"Birds of a feather flock together.
John Bull, he used me well.
Birds of a feather flock together.
One's cousin must be right.
Birds of a feather flock together.
It riles me when folks tell
How our Anglo-Saxon plumage
Is rubbing off the white.

"Ain't we the Christian nations
That head the march to Zion?
Ain't we the Christian nations
That calculate to love
Our neighbors' countries as our own?
The eagle and the lion
Will now walk out to luncheon
Off the lambkin and the dove."

KRUGER AND VICTORIA

There are two old faces play
Peek-a-boo through the smoke.
The one is grim and gray,
Rough as a mask of oak,
A seasoned bit of board
That might break a British sword.

The other, more aged yet,
With a woman's motion peers,
A weary face afret
With love and doubt and tears,
But brows above that frown
In shadow of a crown.

PRAYERS IN CAMP

We praise Thee for all Thy mercies,
Our weal and our neighbors' harms,
And especially for the reverses
 Befalling the British arms.
Thou hast set up pride in the pillory,
The heart of the spoiler faints,
While the best of modern artillery
 Speaks for Thy simple saints.

We acknowledge Thy gracious Providence,
In that we passed our guns
As " agricultural implements "
 Through the port of those haughty ones,
That their hands have ground our axes,
 Their oil has fed our lamp,
That their Uitlander taxes
 Have built the Transvaal camp.

Chastise their greed and their vanity,
Their trespass against our rights,
An insult to all humanity,
 A term which means the Whites.
We, too, were not given to chaffer
 With Hottentots, Zulus and such,
But it's one thing to slaughter the Kaffir
 And another to rob the Dutch.

PUZZLEHEAD

What if Right makes Might,
Not Might makes Right,
And God, the All or the Nought,
Is less extinct than we thought !

Those Dutchmen say, — but they're fools
Who will not fight by rules.
(Is the art of war complete
In knowing how to beat?)

Yet yonder upon their knees
They make my marrow freeze,
Though, faith, I don't know why.
Britannia rules the sky.

A prayer-meeting ! What has that
To do with a battle? Scat !
Lyddite shell makes a queer amen.
Was Jehovah joking then?

GLORY

At the crowded gangway they kissed good-bye.
He had half a mind to scold her.
An officer's mother and not keep dry
The epaulet on his shoulder!

* * * * *

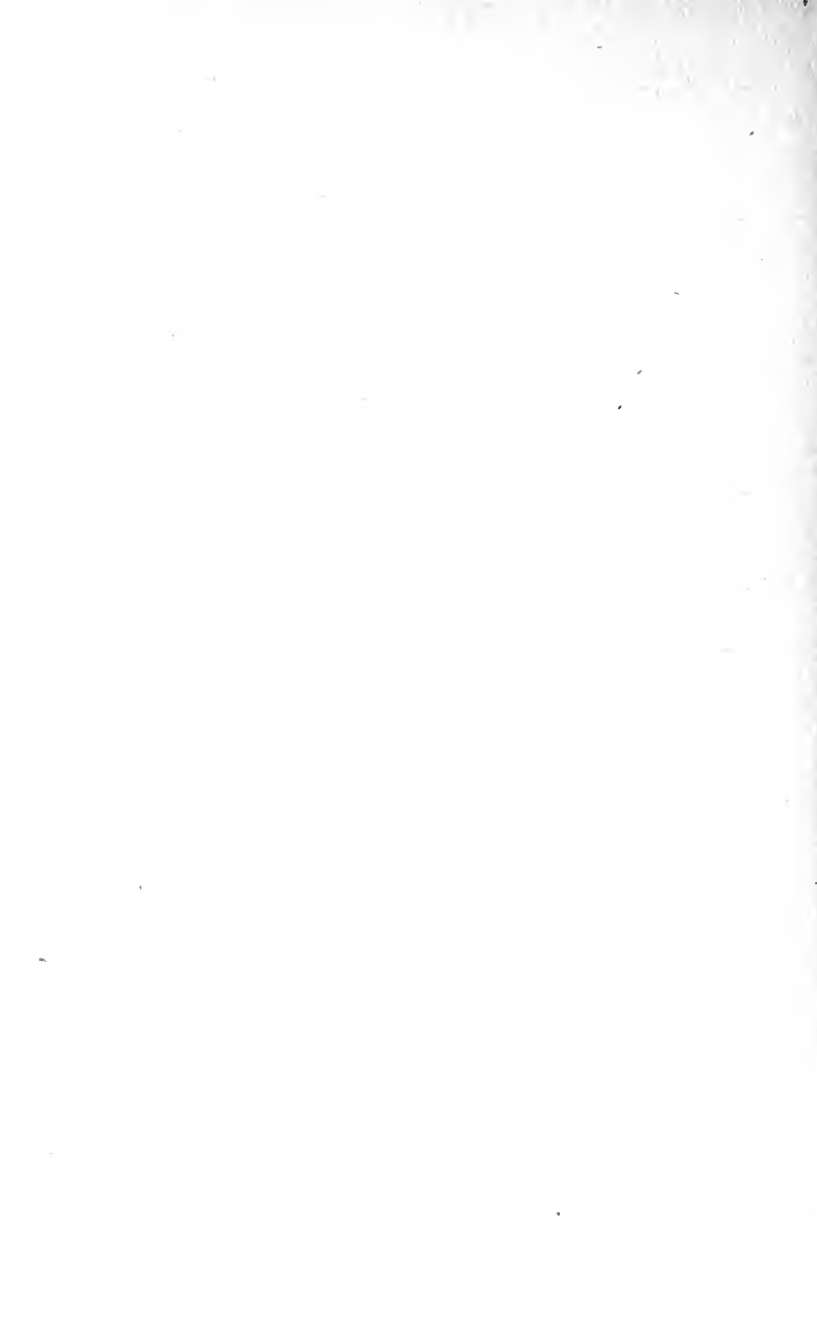
He had forgotten mother and fame,
His mind in a blood-mist floated,
But when reeling back from carnage they came,
One told him : " You are promoted ! "

His friend smiled up from the cursed red sand,
The look was afar, eternal,
But he tried to salute with his shattered hand :
" Room now for another colonel ! "

* * * * *

Again he raged in that lurid hell
Where the country he loved had thrown him.
" You are promoted ! " shrieked a shell.
His mother would not have known him.

CABLEGRAMS



DUNDEE

“ My knight has fought a gallant fight.

Dundee, Dundee !

I'll wing him word of dear delight,
For pale he walks in shadow-sight,
His weary eyes with slumber bound
And the Union Jack about him wound,
As seeking love and me.”

Ah, why should foeman flash reply

And from Dundee?

“ He lies beneath the Afric sky,
As many a hero more must lie,
Nor wifely message on his breast
Can lull that soldier heart to rest,
While cannon shake the lea.”

O war ! will gold repay us for

Dundee, Dundee?

And if so rich the firstlings are
Of thy red-reaping scimitar,
How will thy granaries over-run,
Till shuddering stars and solemn sun
Tell God what things they see !

AN ANACHRONISM

“Pray use my ambulance. Happy to lend,”
Quoth General White, as if to a friend.
The Dutchman made a courteous bend.

“Burghers!” called Joubert. “Blankets here
And plenty of water! I sadly fear
These wounded British have need of cheer.”

Wide grinned the black-mouthed howitzers all
To see those queerest of enemies fall
To pouring the balsam after the ball.

A VETERAN OF ELANDSLAAGTE

Laughing from the hurly-burly
Came the Gordon, with a snick
In his neck, and with his curly
Chestnut mop less bright and thick
Where a ball had scored her tally,
Ear-lap gone, a reddened shoe,
And, no case for shilly-shally,
His right arm shot four times through.

Just before the youngster suffers
Sponge and saw, he laughs again.
“Deil-ma-care! If yond auld duffers
Trow they spilt my parritch when
All their bonny lead they landed
Up this sleeve, they dinna ken
I’ve the luck to be left-handed.”
Kruger might have kissed him then.

SEVEN FROM EIGHT

Add seven dead fools to a vagabond,
And the sum is eight Dutch heroes.
That's the arithmetic up beyond,
Where our lords of gold and of diamond
Most commonly count as zeroes.

'Twas already a murder without remorse,
When the eight ran out on the level,
As blithe as bairns at play in the gorse,
And dared the Imperial White Horse,
Who gave them back the devil.

But the louts had covered their troop, which thus
Was shifted to safe position,
While into the eight that courted us,
We had been pouring an over-plus
Of excellent ammunition.

One staggered to shelter, amid our cheers
That failed to wake the seven,
For whom, though my heart is hard with years,
I had almost shed a soldier's tears,
Almost believed in heaven.

This little incident put us out
Worse than a Dutch tactician,
For the more these Boers are humane, devout,
Patriots, martyrs, the more they flout
Our civilizing mission.

NICHOLSON'S NEK

We do not look for flattery,
We men who lost our battery
And reserves of ammunition through panic of the
mules,
But we deprecate the jollity
With which the world's frivolity
Will air its wit at our expense in club-house
vestibules.

We've muffed it past all charity,
But spare us your hilarity,
Us falling here by groups and squads beneath
their fiery lead,
As helpless as a nunnery,
Hemmed in by awful gunnery
That tears our flanks, our front, our rear, and
pours from overhead.

We've nothing more to say on it,
Content to fix the bayonet
And blazon comedy with blood, since so our
fortune rules.
The jest begins to weary us.
We hope that death is serious,
Even the death of Englishmen discomfited by
mules.

“ON TO PRETORIA!”

All hats off in Pretoria,
While the British prisoners pass!
A new translation of *gloria*
Is taught in Oom Paul's class.

A Dutch translation of *gloria*,
But can London better the phrase?
All heads bared in Pretoria,
While the conquered wend their ways!

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

Premier Marquis of England,
With eager Methuen he came ;
Premier Marquis of England,
And never a son to his name.
Paying his debt to England,
Against the bullets he stood.
Ah, Premier Marquis of England,
The Modder likes noble blood.

Fifteenth Marquis of Winchester !
The first of his gallant race,
The earliest Marquis of Winchester,
Was Lord Treasurer unto his Grace
Edward the Sixth, nor Winchester
Has been wanting in duty since.
The fifteenth Marquis of Winchester
Would not be the first to wince.

Sweet be his slumber in Africa,
As in his ancestral vault !
Whoever has sinned against Africa,
The soldier is not at fault.
Let Chamberlain answer for Africa
At the Bar all burning white,
But in India, Egypt, Africa,
Is the fallen soldier right.

THE BLACK WATCH

They had trained us into their treasons,
And their withering welcome of lead
Might have been the best of reasons
Why another brigade had fled,
But we Highlanders have our fancies,
Our glamour of old romances,
And so we lie dying and dead.

We make dour faces together,
Though we're not the lads for a fuss,
But it's hardly like lounging on heather
To writhe in your life-blood, thus.
No touch of heather and gowan,
No glint of the red-berried rowan
Ever again for us.

The cunning of this land's breeding
Passes the wit of men.
Our general — yonder he's bleeding —
Marshalled us on as a hen
Might cluck her brood through the shadows,
Over the dawn-dewy meadows,
Down to the fox's den.

God rest him! 'Twas never an error
To follow a glorious chief.

If a man's conquered only by terror,
Let Britain be proud in her grief,
For the last Boer bullet shall whistle
Ere we change the sturdy Scotch thistle
For the sign of the aspen leaf.

From dusk to dusk roars the battle,
Till the pulses cease in our wrists,
The rifles muffle their rattle,
And our eyes are drowsy with mists.
One thought is the last of life's sorrow,
The thought of our women to-morrow,
When the War Office reads out the lists.

FOES

The rifle was missing from off its pegs,
But the old Dutch clock, its face gone white,
Ticked the second its owner's legs
Were shot away in Stormberg fight.

The ghastly dawn of that bitter day
— Could it scare the hound in an English hall
That he howled as if, half a world away,
He had heard the thud of his master's fall?

As each man writhed in his dying throes,
Hand gripped hand on the blood-soaked sod,
And thus, like brothers, those quiet foes
Departed this life to the mercy of God.

THE FIFTH BRIGADE AT COLENZO

It was the Irishmen made the advance,
— Black eyes, grey eyes, all on the dance —
 Irishmen daring for England.
The Dublins they led, with a laugh and a cheer,
Through the blue bright morning that cost them
 dear,
 Irishmen dying for England.

In front, the plain to the curving flood,
With the hills beyond whose price was blood,
 — In front, the honor of England.
Never an enemy there to be seen,
Yet woe for the shamrock, woe for the green
 Bathed in the red of England!

For those tranquil hills had begun to pour
A rifle-rattle and cannon-roar
 Into the path of England.
Most hateful of all that horrible song,
The fierce little quick-fire's Bong-bong-bong
 Crackled its laugh at England.

Here drops a Patrick, yonder a Mike,
A Rory, a Dennis, a Larry, alike
 Gasping in dust for England.
Long and shrill shall the Banshee keen
On the coming night in the island green,
 The island that bleeds for England.

While the dying sobbed and the wounded crept,
On to the bank of the river swept
 Irishmen fighting for England,
And for full five hours of shot and sun
They held the ground that their valor won,
 Irishmen winning for England.

AN ONLY SON

"This will mean the Victoria Cross,"
His comrades proudly said.
They were sick with counting their loss,
As they sat by his rough camp-bed,
And were glad to praise, instead,
The son of the coming Chief.

'T was "Bobs" that would bring relief,
The hero of Kandahar.

"I will sharpen his sword," said Grief,
Who had grown so great with war
That her shadow, stretching far,
Dimmed Britain's fields and fells.

So the whitening mouth, that tells
To the last how he failed to save
The guns, drops wide, and the shells
Hiss over his idle grave,
But the great sea roars like drums,
For beware! the Father comes.

AN INCIDENT OF THE SIEGE

He was only an entomologist,
Only wanted a fly in his fist.
Let Cecil Rhodes nurse a diamond whim,
South African moths were enough for him.

He might have left Ladysmith at the first,
But for all his science, he had a cursed
English grit of his own, as he told his cat,
And he was n't milksop enough for that.

So he just stayed on with Grimalkin there,
Writing his book on the cellar stair,
And laughing to see Tabby's back go up
At every jar of a brutal Krupp.

If one could trace the myriad strains
That went to the moulding of that man's brains
Through patient centuries, one might find
The infinite cost of a master-mind.

But shrapnel is shrapnel; it does n't choose.
Poor Puss was rubbing against his shoes
When he came to the door, and by Long Tom!
I swear she spat at that fizzing bomb.

Well! There was mincemeat enough to please
The bloodiest Boer on the stiffest knees.
He only said: "Look after my cat,"
But our friend the powder had seen to that.

AMBUSHED

Over the lonesome African plain
The stars look down, like eyes of the slain.

A bumping ride across gullies and ruts,
Now a grumble and now a jest,
A bit of profanity jolted out,
— Whist!

Into a hornet's nest!

Curse on the scout!

Long-bearded Boers rising out of the rocks,
Rocks that already are crimson-splashed,
Ping-ping of bullets, stabbings and cuts,
As if hell hurtled and hissed,
— Then, muffling the shocks,
A sting in the breast,
A mist,
A woman's face down the darkness flashed,
Rest.

All as before, save for still forms spread
Under the boulders dripping red.

Over the lonesome African plain
The stars look down, like eyes of the slain.

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON

(During the holidays the Boers besieging Ladysmith
shot into the city shells containing plum-puddings.)

No fear of hoax. A Dutchman jokes

In earnest, as he fights,

And every shell they've plugged so well

To Christmas cheer invites.

Plum-pudding cold! What bard has told

Siege of such hard condition

That those shut in by cannon din

Devour the ammunition?

Their neighbor wit a plan has hit

Bids fair to suit the czar

And ruin quite thine appetite,

Old greedy God of War.

Plum-pudding hot! A lucky shot!

Henceforth rude lead displeases.

Let's fight it out in one grand bout

Of puddings and Dutch cheeses!

A WOMAN'S CHRONICLE OF 1900

Spion Kop!

The hill was won, the hill was won.

What matters that? I only know

My Louis perished — not alone.

Full many an English mother's son

Joined in his parting groan.

But he, my first-born, lying so

In the awful zone

Of death, close up to their firing-line,

Riddled with shot, that boy of mine!

Eight bullets struck him ere his cry was done,

His cry for water — his — who dug our well

Where dogs and cattle drank the day he fell.

Paardeberg!

I smell it yet, that carrion pit,

That hole of slaughter in their ring

Of fire. May God remember it!

My baby, breathing stench for air,

Died on the seventh day.

I could not hear her father's prayer

For the thundering

Of their sixty guns, while we scooped her grave,

His latest prayer, for Modder's wave

Had swirled his lyddite-shattered corse away

Before to death's pallid familiars came

A worse companionship, defeat and shame.

With De Wet
My twelve-year-old, my last of all,
Is riding now beneath the stars,
My rosy Jan, of frame too small,
Of soul too innocent for wars,
Riding to-night, unless
Already the mimosa hides
A rigidness
That was my child. No, no, he rides
With bold De Wet, to vex them 'mid
Their homestead bonfires. Wind, that bearest on
Thy wings the wailing of a people gone,
Shall e'er our hatred perish? God forbid!

BLOOD-ROAD

The Old Year groaned as he trudged away,
His guilty shadow black on the snow,
And the heart of the glad New Year turned grey
At the road Time bade him go.

“O Gaffer Time, is it blood-road still?
Is the noontide dark as the stormy morn?
Is man's will yet as a wild beast's will?
When shall the Christ be born?”

He laughed as he answered, grim Gaffer Time,
Whose laugh is sadder than all men's moan.
“That name rides high on our wrath and crime,
For the Light in darkness shone.

“And thou, fair youngling, wilt mend the tale?”
The New Year stared on the misty wold,
Where at foot of a cross all lustrous pale
Men raged for their gods of gold.

“Come back, Old Year, with thy burden bent.
Come back and settle thine own dark debt.”
“Nay, let me haste where the years repent,
For I've seen what I would forget.”

“ And I, the first of a stately train,
The tramp of a century heard behind,
Must I be fouled with thy murder-stain?
Is there no pure path to find? ”

The Old Year sneered as he limped away
To the place of his penance dim and far.
The New Year stood in the gates of day,
Crowned with the morning star.

POSTLUDES

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

You've made a bloody bad pother
Over there on the veldt, St. George,
You blustering, beautiful fellow,
Who would hammer the globe on your forge.
I love your blue eyes and the yellow
Wave of your hair, but your sword
— Has it dinged for a dragon your brother,
St. Michael, Beloved of the Lord?

A BRITISH BARGAIN

Tears, tears, tears !
Rare tears that heart-break yields !
Bleeding tears,
The cost of diamond fields !

Tears for stones !
The dull earth gendered those ;
These, men's groans,
And women's ceaseless woes.

Tears, tears, tears !
In mines of anguish wrought !
Christ, what tears
For diamonds dearly bought !

ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

A pillar cloudy-dim
By day, and fire-pillar by night, no more
Than these to be our witness unto Him
Who moves before !

The cherubim that reach
Their golden wings above the mercy-seat,
Look sadly through the incense each to each,
But kiss His feet.

Perchance our little ones
Shall see the Promised Land mysterious,
But we must lie where desert winds and suns
Still trouble us.

Yet though the evil came
In lieu of good, thistles for cinnamon,
We trust His presence in the cloud and flame,
And follow on.

COURT-MARTIALED

Young blood, as wild as flame,
Prompted the angry thrust.
He died the death of shame
And left dishonored dust.

Bewildered by surcease
Of that last strangling strife,
The soul in sudden peace
Beheld the Book of Life.

On one clear page he saw
A strange initial, red.
“The rubric of God’s law,”
His quiet angel said.

“The kind Eternities,
O child so sore perplexed,
Will draw thee to their knees
And teach thee noble text.

“The gold-leaf and the blue
Shall lovingly combine
To bring this crimson hue
Within the fair design.

“ The Artist is not mocked.”
But here the spirit turned.
White dreams about him flocked.
Keen longings in him burned.
His answer, hushed with awe,
Hardly the angel heard.
“ The rubric of God’s law !
Teach me His perfect word.”

PIGEON POST

White wing, white wing,
Lily of the air,
What word dost bring,
On whose errand fare?

*Red word, red word,
Snowy plumes abhor.
I, Christ’s own bird,
Do the work of war.*

MAN AND WOMAN : BOER AND BRITON

I

God set the waste between them,
And the flame,
But the stars had watched and seen them,
How they came.

Whirlwind and desert burning,
Thunder-wrack,
Could hinder not their yearning,
Blind their track.

God piled the seas, in beryl
Wall on wall,
But their hearts, that laughed at peril,
Leapt them all.

Icebergs, fiercely riding
Arctic stream,
Sought and missed their gliding
Sails of dream.

God called the hills together,
Rings on rings,
But they wrought from sky and heather
Purple wings.

Over peaks snow-sheeted
 Blithe they went,
And God stood defeated,
 Well content.

II

Then Time came forth, with malice
 And with fleers,
And he fashioned them a chalice
 Of the years.

Covetous and cruel
 Wonder-smith,
Mined their strength for jewel,
 Drew the pith

From the ruddy flower
 Of their spring,
Crushed their golden hour
 Quivering.

Yet he dimmed all glitter
 Of the cup,
And with juices bitter
 Filled it up.

Oh, they thirsted for it,
 Liquor rare !

Merrily they bore it
To the air;

Mocked his low cave-portal,
And above
Drank to the immortal
Joy of love.

III

Life set a snare between them,
Strong as pain,
But the stars had watched and seen them
Break the chain.

Goblins forged it wary,
Under sea,
But the sword of fairy
Cut them free.

Life gave to her a labor,
And to him,
And neither saw his neighbor
For the dim

Dust-clouds from the hammer
And the stone,
But beneath the clamor
Crept a tone.

Life searched the poison garden
For a lie
That waved its branches hard on
Cloud and sky,
Daring Truth to pluck it,
Roots in hell,
But the lightning struck it,
And it fell.

IV

Death loved them for their valor,
And his torch
Beckoned them through Gates of Pallor,
Ivory Porch.
But the tender shadow
Hid her face,
And the amaranth meadow
Lost his trace.
Where the spirits glisten
And rejoice,
They drew apart to listen
For a voice.

Pearl and rubies seeded
In their dress
Vexed them for a needed
Preciousness.

They, for starry tires,
Begged the boon
Of their old desires,
Pilgrim shoon,

And passed the blue pavilions,
Scorned the sun,
Amid Death's shining millions
Seeking one.

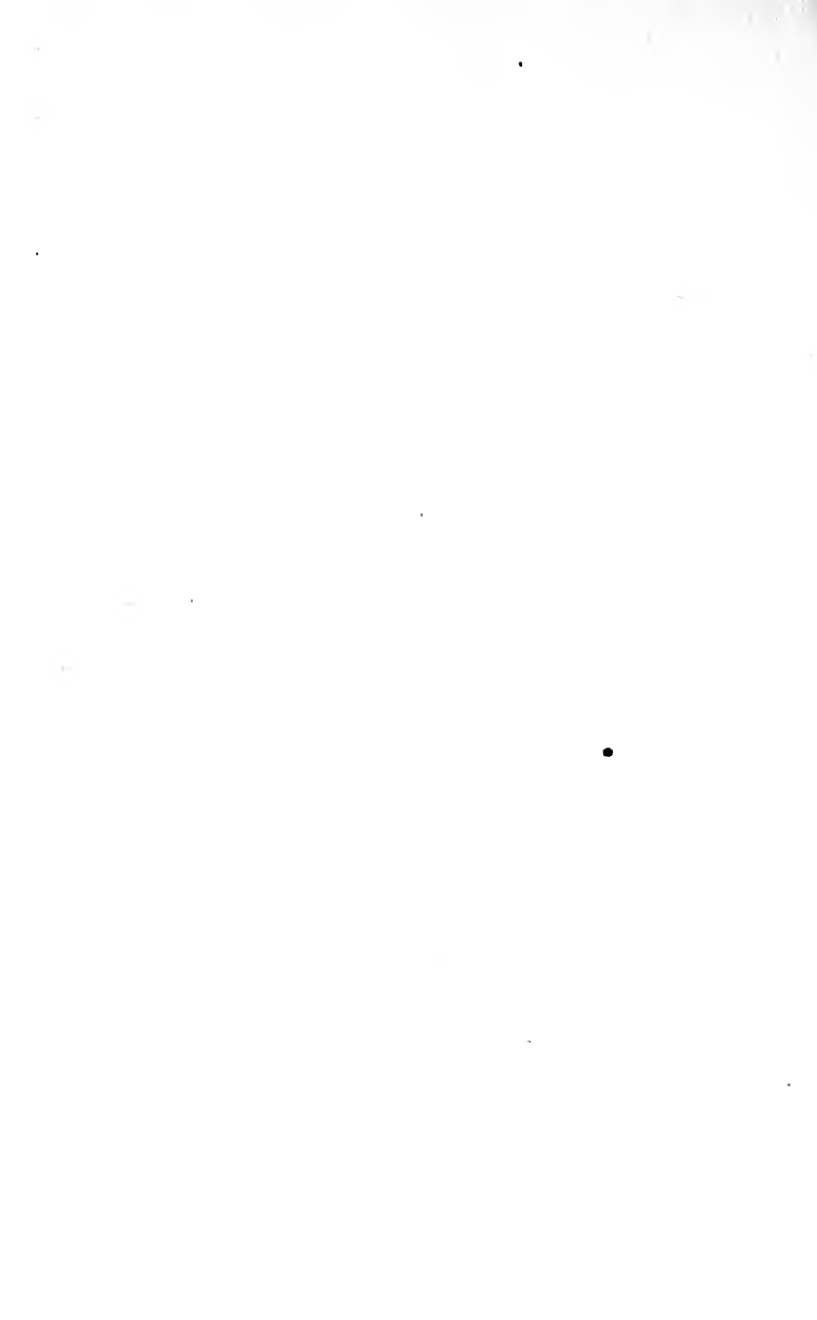
BETRAYED

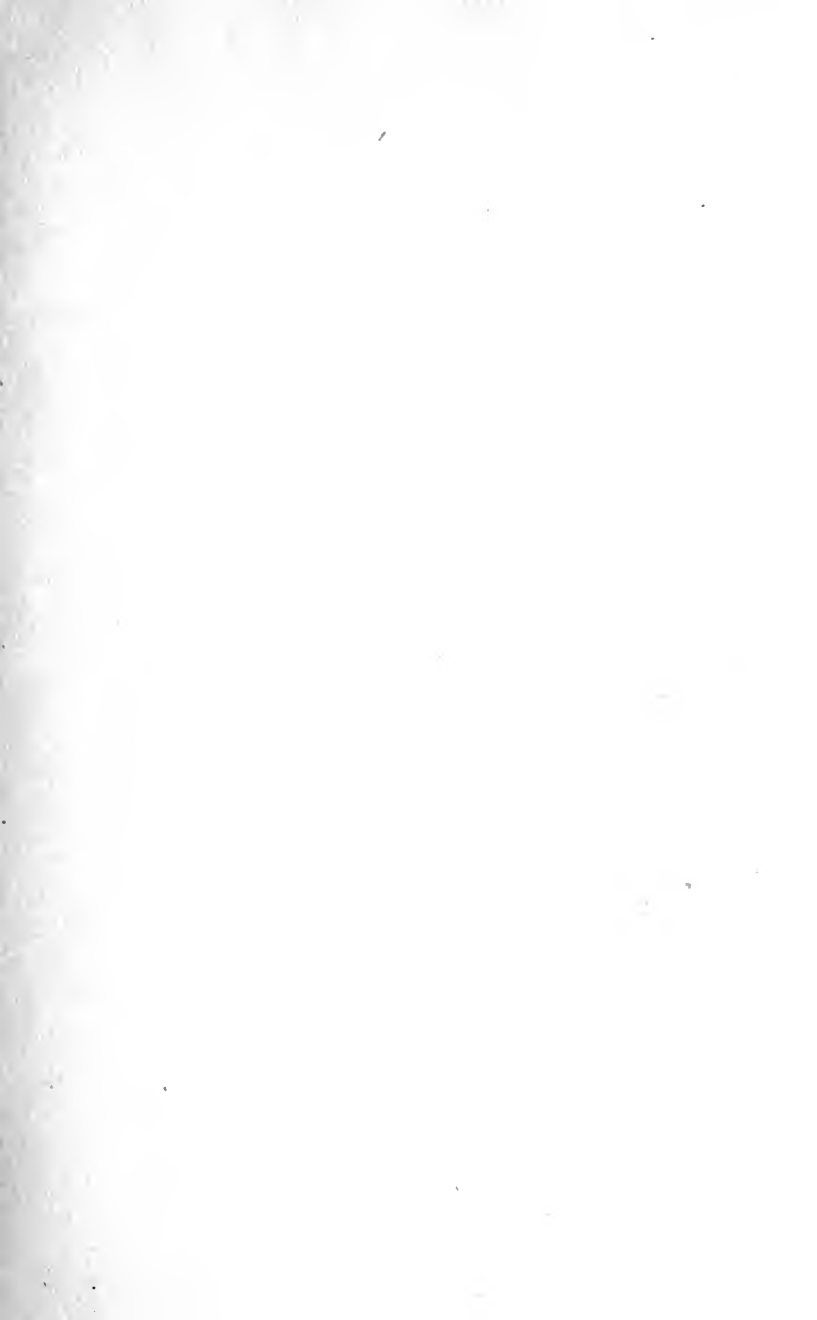
The nightmare melts at last, and London wakes
To her old habit of victorious ease.

More men, and more, and more for over seas,
More guns, until the giant hammer breaks
That patriot folk whom even God forsakes.

Shall not Great England work her will on these,
The foolish little nations, and appease
An angry shame that in her memory aches?

But far beyond the fierce-contested flood,
The cannon-planted pass, the shell-torn town,
The last wild carnival of fire and blood,
Beware, beware that dim and awful Shade,
Armored with Milton's word and Cromwell's
frown,
Affronted Freedom, of her own betrayed !







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